

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15

AID-20 IO-13 RSR-01 /123 W

----- 022479

R 202202Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4625

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 2624

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CS

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION FORCES AGAIN MAKING UNITY ATTEMPT

BEGIN GUMMARY: THE THREE LIVING COSTA RICAN EX-PRESIDENTE:
MARIO ECHANDI, OTILLO ULATE, AND JAOQUIN TREJOS FERNANDEZ,
PUT THEIR SIGNATURES TO A DOCUMENT EARLIER THIS WEEK CONDEMNING
THE
PLN AND PRESIDENT FIGUERES FOR GOVERNMENT MISMANAGEMENT
AND CALLING FOR OPPOSITION UNITY. GROWING OUT OF THIS
CAREFULLY
MANAGED MEETING HAS BEEN A MOVE SPEARHEADED BY THE EX-PRESIDENTS
TO RESOLVE THE FRACTIONATED OPPOSITION INTO A COALITION
BEHIND A SINGLE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE WHO WOULD FACE THE PLN'S
CHOICE IN FEBRUARY 1974. END SUMMARY.

1. IN THE WAKE OF A WELL PUBLICIZED MEETING ON JULY 13 IN
WHICH THEY CRITICIZED THE PLN AND APPEALED FOR OPPOSITION
UNITY, THE THREE EX-PRESIDENTS FORMED A FOUR-MAN UNITY
COMMISSION HEADED BY EL DIARIO'S JULIO SUNOL AND CONSISTING OF
FERNANDO LARA, ALBERTO OREAMUNO, AND MANUEL JIMENEZ DE LA
GUARDIA, TO FORGE A UNITY FORMULA ACCEPTABLE TO ALL FACTIONS.
ACCORDING TO SUNOL THE FORMULA HASL MET WITH SURPRISING FAVORABLE
RESPONSE, PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE OF THE SUPPORT OF THE THREE
EX-PRZNIDENTS. THE COMMISSION HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH KEY
ELEMENTS OF THE PRD, UN, AND PNI, AS WELL, OF COURSE AS THE
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PARTIES REPRESENTED BY THE EX-PRESIDENTS THEMSELVES.

2. SUNOL REPORTS THAT ALL PARTIES HAVE AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN AN ASSEMBLY OF ASSEMBLIES, POSSIBLY TO BE HELD WITHIN TEN DAYS, WHERE EACH PARTICIPATING POLITICAL PARTY WOULD PROPOSE PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES FOR SELECTION BY THE ASSEMBLY DELEGATES. SUNOL SAYS THE PROCESS OF BALLOTING WOULD BE REPEATED UNTIL A MAJORITY CONSENSUS IS REACHED ON CANDIDATES. THE WINNING CANDIDATE WOULD HAVE HIS CHOICE OF WHATEVER PARTY NAME HE WANTS TO RUN ON. (EACH PARTY WOULD BE FREE TO RUN SEPARATE SLATES OF DEPUTIES IN THE NATIONAL ELECTION.) THE ONLY POLITICAL GROUP, APART FROM THE COMMUNISTS AND THE SOCIALISTS, WHICH HAS DECLARED

IT WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IS THE UNIMPORTANT CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY WHICH IN SUNOL'S OPINION HAS CAST ITS LOT WITH THE PLN.

COMMENT: THE ASSEMBLY OF ASSEMBLIES IDEA IS AN IMAGINATIVE ONE WHICH CONCEIVABLY COULD BE ACCEPTED BY THE TWO MAIN OPPOSITION CANDIDATES TREJOS ESCALANTE (UN) AND GONZALEZ MARTEN (PNI) WHO, BY THEIR CONTINUED INSISTENCE ON GOING ALL THE WAY TO THE ELECTIONS, POSE THE MAJOR OBSTACLE TO UNITY. TREJOS ESCALANTE HAS ALWAYS STOOD BY HIS INDEPENDENT CANDIDACY ON THE BASIS THAT IT IS THE PRODUCT OF A POPULAR ELECTION BY HIS PARTY RANK AND FILE WHICH HE IS UNABLE TO GIVE UP BY HIS OWN DECISION. GONZALEZ MARTEN CLAIMS FOR HIS PART THAT HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN DISPOSED TO A STRAIGHT UP-AND-DOWN POPULAR PRIMARY WITH ANY OPPOSITION CANDIDATE AND IN FACT WAS PREPARED TO DO JUST THAT ON MAY 20TH, THE DATE SCHEDULED FOR AN OPPOSITION PRIMARY, BEFORE TREJOS ESCALANTE BAILED OUT AND THE PLAN WAS ABORTED. SO FAR THERE HAS BEEN NO HINT IN THE PRESS THAT UNITY PROGRESS IS AS WELL DEVELOPED AS SUNOL DESCRIBES. ALTHOUGH SENTIMENT IS BUILDING RAPIDLY FOR A SOLUTION TO THE FRACTIONIZATION OF THE OPPOSITION. THERE HAVE BEEN NO ALLUSIONS WHATSOEVER IN THE PRESS TO THE DESCRIBED MECHANISM FOR SELECTING A CANDIDATE. IF SUNOL'S JUDGEMENT IS CORRECT THAT THE PNI'S FIRST ECHELON LEADERS ARE READY FOR A CONVENTION, EVEN THOUGH GONZALEZ MARTEN HIMSELF HAS NOT YET AGREED, AND THAT UN PARTY LEADER FRANCISCO CALDERON GUARDIA, IF NOT THE CANDIDATE HIMSELF

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IS PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE, THERE MAY BE LITTLE THAT EITHER GONZALEZ MARTEN OR TREJOS ESCALANTE CAN DO TO SUSTAIN THEIR INDIVIDUAL CANDIDACIES, PARTICULARLY AGAINST THE GREAT PRESTIGE OF THE THREE EX-PRESIDENTS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: OPPOSITION PARTIES, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 JUL 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SANJO002624
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS LANE
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: SAN JOSE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730720/aaaaaoid.tel
Line Count: 112
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <18-Jan-2002 by thigpegh>; APPROVED <11 FEB 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OPPOSITION FORCES AGAIN MAKING UNITY ATTEMPT BEGIN GUMMARY: THE THREE LIVING COSTA RICAN EX-PRESIDENTE
TAGS: PINT, CS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005